

COMMENTS ON INR RESEARCH MEMORANDUM,  
SALT: SOVIET ATTITUDES AND TACTICS

Net Evaluation Section--Pages 14-15

1. The first three paragraphs of this section adequately set forth several broad considerations important to an understanding of the problem and concludes--appropriately, we think--that "Soviet evaluation of gross changes in strategic relations would not differ much from American ones."

2. The author then identifies three potential sources of divergence on more subtle aspects of U.S. and Soviet calculations. These subtleties seem overdrawn, particularly since in these calculations no one seems to know what level constitutes deterrence or what meaningful value to ascribe to differences in calculations that involve tens of millions of fatalities. The really important aspect of net evaluating under these conditions is whether one's position is getting better or worse, and we agree with the author that the Soviets would probably evaluate gross changes much as we would.

3. We would recommend, therefore, that the three subsequent paragraphs be dropped as unnecessary and potentially misleading for the following reasons:

The First: Intelligence and operational uncertainties would probably lead both the U.S. and USSR to project greater capabilities onto the other's forces than they might in fact be planning, leading to systematic biases in the results. Systematic biases of this kind are intentionally introduced for worst case planning and for examining one's own as well as the enemy's force decisions. This is not a weakness of the analysis, but is one kind of sensitivity analysis which both the U.S. and USSR are familiar with.

The Second: The example given is unclear. How, for example, could the Soviets conclude that they might "minimize further damage to the USSR" following a U.S. first strike. Would they fire their weapons at empty silos and SAC bases, or into the Polaris patrol areas?

The Third: There is, insofar as we know, no basis for inferring that Soviet net evaluation analysis is less developed than that of the U.S. Certainly not on the grounds of Soviet mathematical incompetence or lack of experience in modeling complex systems. Moreover, there are examples of Soviet claims to simulation of military problems that suggest a high degree of interest in the subject and an understanding of the problems in much the same terms as in the U.S.

4. The last paragraph of this section is a balanced presentation, and should be retained.